

[IMAGE]

## Smoking Leads to Spine Surgery

By Editorial Staff

If you're a current smoker, we hope you're speaking with a health care professional right now about how to quit. If you're not, we urge you to consider doing so, because your risk of suffering one or more of any number of diseases appears to increase dramatically if you're a smoker. In fact, even back pain occurs more frequently if you're a smoker, and the pain may lead to surgery.

Lumbar spinal stenosis, a condition characterized by spinal canal narrowing that causes low back pain due to the increased pressure on spinal nerves, appears to be more prevalent in smokers because nicotine constricts blood flow and promotes inflammation. In a study published in *The Spine Journal*, researchers discovered that smokers were more likely not only to suffer from lumbar spinal stenosis, but also to eventually undergo surgery for the condition. In fact, compared to nonsmokers, heavy smokers (15 or more cigarettes per day) were 46 percent more likely to undergo surgery, while moderate smokers (14 or less cigarettes daily) had a 31 percent higher risk and even former smokers had a 13 percent increased risk.

spine pain - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark What's the takeaway? Smoking can lead to back pain requiring surgery, and the more you smoke, the worse the risk. And while even ex-smokers have a small increased risk compared to nonsmokers, it's significantly lower than the risk inherited by smokers. Just another reason to say no to smoking. Talk to your doctor about the smoking cessation program that's right for you.

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